GRAMMAR Modal verbs

STEP 1 CHECK THE BASICS

Ability, permission, obligation and advice

1 Do the modal verbs express ability, permission, obligation, no obligation or advice?

I can speak French. *ability*

1 We have to leave now. *obligation*
2 You ought to tell somebody about your problems. *advice*
3 She doesn't have to do the maths exam. *no obligation*
4 She must do the maths exam. *obligation*
5 I won't be able to help you with the project. *ability*
6 They mustn't break the law. *obligation*
7 He didn't have to copy the CDs. *no obligation*
8 She hasn't been able to phone her parents. *ability*
9 Can I go to the party on Saturday please? *permission*

2 Rewrite the sentences. Use the modal verbs in the list. In four cases, more than one answer is possible.

can | can't | don't have to | have to | must | mustn't | ought to | shouldn't

1 It isn't necessary to buy a present. You *don't have to buy a present.*
2 Wearing jeans is not permitted. You *can't / mustn't wear jeans.*
3 It's a good idea to go to the party. You *ought to go to the party.*
4 It's possible to find it on the Internet. You *can find it on the Internet.*
5 Telling me the truth is obligatory. You *have to / must tell me the truth.*
6 It's necessary to pass a lot of exams. You *have to / must pass a lot of exams.*
7 It's prohibited to touch the chocolate cake. You *can't / mustn't touch the chocolate cake.*
8 It's a bad idea to arrive late. You *shouldn't arrive late.*

3 Rewrite the sentences using *should, shouldn't, must, mustn't, have to* or *don't have to.*

1 It's not a good idea to leave your car unlocked. You *shouldn't leave your car unlocked.*
2 I recommend you contact the police. You *should contact the police.*
3 There's no obligation to buy if you don't want to. You *don't have to buy if you don't want to.*
4 It's not necessary to buy food. We have enough. You *don't have to buy food. We have enough.*
5 It's compulsory to present your passport. You *must / have to present your passport.*
6 It's very important that you phone if you need help. You *should / must phone if you need help.*
7 You're not allowed to make illegal copies. You *mustn't make illegal copies.*

STEP 2 MOVE ON

Speculation and deduction

4 Choose the correct verb in each sentence.

1 You **can't** / **mustn't** / **may** be Lisa's brother. You look nothing like her.
2 I **couldn't** / **must** / **may** phone you this evening if I have time.
3 I'm never wrong about anything, so I **must** / **can't** / **may** be right.
4 This **can** / **may** / **must** be my composition – this is my handwriting.

5 Rewrite the sentences using the modal verbs.

1 It's possible that I'll be late. **(may)**
I may be late.
2 I'm sure you think I'm crazy. **(must)**
You must think I'm crazy.
3 Perhaps you won't like the film. **(might)**
You might not like the film.
4 I don't know if he will be able to come. **(may)**
He may not be able to come.
5 Maybe you'd like to go to bed. **(might)**
You might like to go to bed.
6 It's possible that I'll buy a new bike. **(might)**
I might buy a new bike.

can, could and *be able to*

6 Complete the sentences with the correct form of *can, could* and *be able to*.

1 *Can / Could* you open the bottle? I *can't* manage to do it.
2 If I *can't* find my tennis racket, I won't *be able to* play.
3 I've never *been able to* sing. But I *can* play the guitar.
4 She has got my number so she *could* phone me next week.

Modal perfects

7 Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use the expressions in the list and a past participle.

can't have | could have | might have | must have | should have | shouldn't have

1 I'm sure you were delighted when you realised your team had won.
You *must have been* delighted when you realised your team had won.
2 It wasn't a good idea to sell the flat.
You *shouldn't have sold* the flat.
3 Perhaps Jack thought that I was going to buy a CD.
Jack *might have thought* that I was going to buy a CD.
4 Why didn't you tell me you were lonely. I would have visited you.
You *should have told* me you were lonely. I would have visited you.
5 There's no way that he's written ten pages. He only started two hours ago.
He *can't have written* ten pages. He only started two hours ago.
6 Going to a Chinese restaurant was a possibility, but we had a pizza instead.
We *could have gone* to a Chinese restaurant, but we had a pizza instead.

8 Complete the minidialogues. Use a modal perfect form and an appropriate verb.

1 A Someone called but I don't know who it was.
B It *might / could have been* Dave – he said he would phone.
2 Rose and Joe have stopped talking to each other.
They *must have had* an argument.
3 I was worried about you last night.
You *shouldn't have worried* so much. I was with my friends.
4 Someone forgot to switch off the television.
Well it *couldn't have been* me. I never watch it.
5 I saw Eric on the beach yesterday.
You *can't have seen* him. He's on holiday in Ireland.
6 I ate a big lunch and I feel terrible now.
You *shouldn't have eaten* so much.
7 This watch was cheap but it doesn't work.
You *should have bought* a more expensive one.

STEP 3 CONSOLIDATE

9 Choose the correct option.

1 **Will you be able to** / **Could you** come to my party?
2 I **couldn't** / **haven't been able to** finish my homework last night.
3 Nobody answered when I phoned. They **should have** / **must have** gone out.
4 I think that someone **might have** / **should have** seen the thieves enter the house.
5 The composition **must** / **may** be between 150 and 200 words long.
6 You **shouldn't** / **needn't** eat too much – you'll regret it.
7 She **mustn't have** / **shouldn't have** insulted him.
8 You **don't have to** / **might not** answer immediately – take your time.